Response Services User Guide

How to design your Response Service items

Royal Mail

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Design for mailing effectiveness

Whichever Royal Mail Response Service you choose, you need to ensure your reply items meet our design criteria. That's the single best way to ensure that Royal Mail processes your responses speedily and efficiently.

These guidelines will help you to get the design of your mail items right every time and avoid them being lost or damaged. You'll be pleased to find there's freedom for you to customise items with your own text and graphics.

Design for mailing effectiveness *(continued)*

Response Plus for efficiency
If you've decided to use Response Plus for your reply items, please follow the guidelines on pages 4-14 and the paper and print specs from page 25. That way you can be sure that your items are 'machinable' and can be processed automatically by our sorting technology. If your designs don't match the guidelines, we may charge 20p for handling each of your items manually.

Response Standard for flexibility
If you've decided to use Response Standard for your reply items, please follow the guidelines on pages 15-22. We also recommend you follow the paper and print specs from page 25. That way you can be sure of receiving a reliable and effective service. If your designs fail to match the guidelines, there is a chance your items may be delayed, lost or damaged.

Our online design tool
Using our online design tool makes it even easier to produce items meeting our design specifications. You simply enter your licence and address information (as supplied by us), then choose an envelope design style. You can access the design tool at **royalmail.com/responseservices**

Do you have a new style alpha licence number?
This specification can only be used if you have a new style alpha licence number (RRRR–RRRR–RRRR), which will also allow you to use our online design tool. If you still have an old style alpha numeric licence number, eg LON123, we recommend that you update it to a new alpha licence number as soon as possible.

You can move to a new alpha licence number, or get the specifications you require with an old style licence number by calling **08457 950950**.

Barcoded Response Services
If you're still using barcoded Response Services, previously known as Response Premium, please remember to add a barcode to each response item. You might also wish to consider switching to the more cost-effective Response Plus. You can do so very easily by calling **08457 950950**. If you wish to stick with barcoded Response Services and require design guidelines, you can get them by calling the same number.

A choice of design options
Whether you opt for Response Plus or Response Standard for your reply items, you have a choice of two print design options:

- Business Reply, which has a highly professional look and feel, ideal for corporate communications.
- Freepost, which has a less formal look, often better suited to consumer-focused campaigns.

Further design guidance
We have created design templates for each of the four design options. These are available free of charge in various envelope sizes.
You can access them by:

- downloading the templates at **royalmail.com/responseservices**
- calling us on **08457 950950** to get us to send them to you.

Know your Response Plus audience

As long as you follow the essential Response Plus specifications, you're free to customise your envelope or card with text or graphics as you wish. Please note that Response Plus is only suitable for letter format items, which meet the Response Plus specifications outlined in this document.

The essential design specifications for Business Reply Plus and Freepost Plus are identical except for the:

- licence number
- address fonts
- indicia.

Don't forget that if you decide to produce a Response Plus item the maximum weight is 100g.

Figure 1.
Business Reply Plus
DL sample design

Figure 2.
Freepost Plus
DL sample design

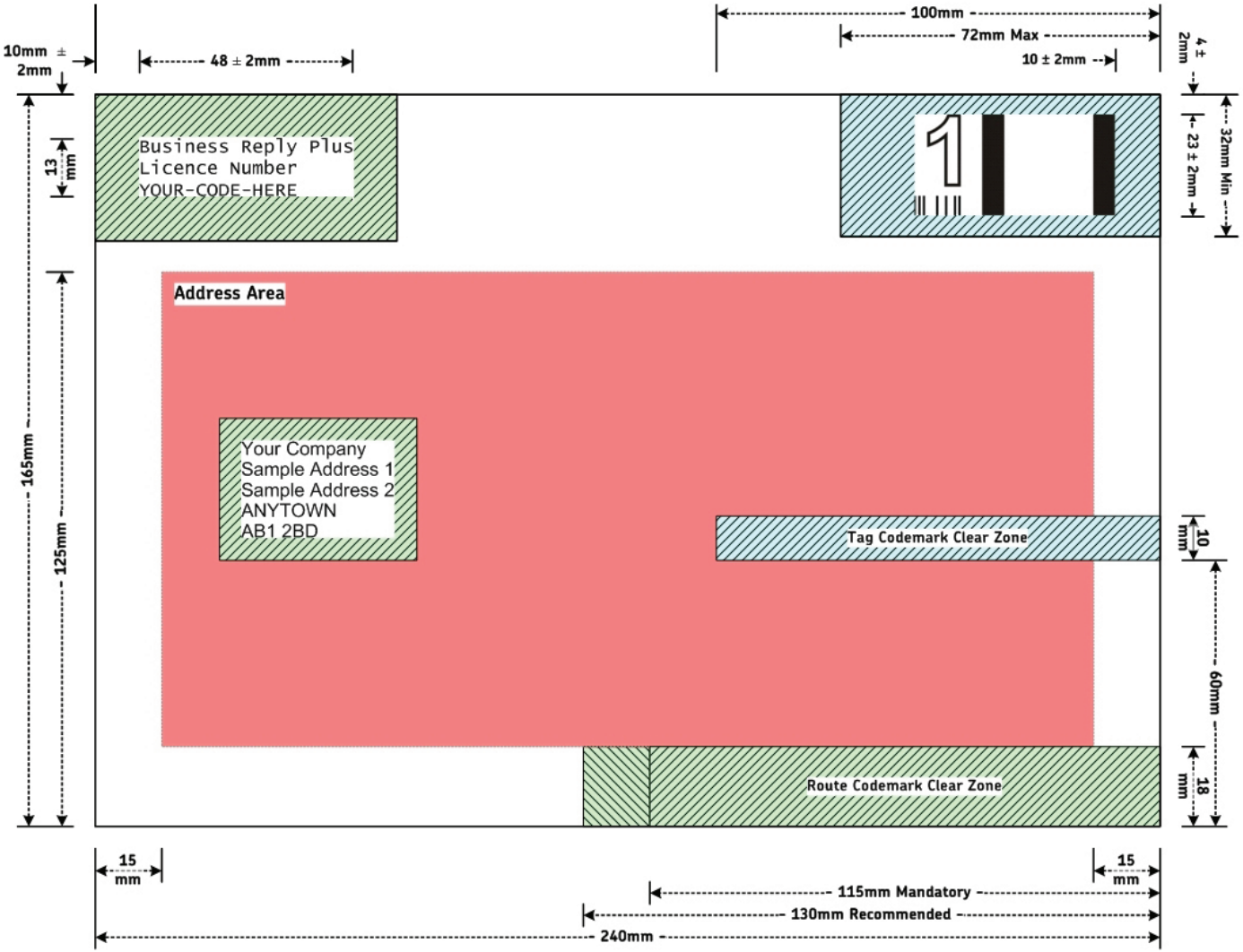
Please note – images are not to scale.

Response Plus design specification

Make sure your Response Plus envelope or card always follows the essential specifications. This will help us get your reply items back to you with greater efficiency.

Figure 3.
Business Reply Plus
Maximum layout specification

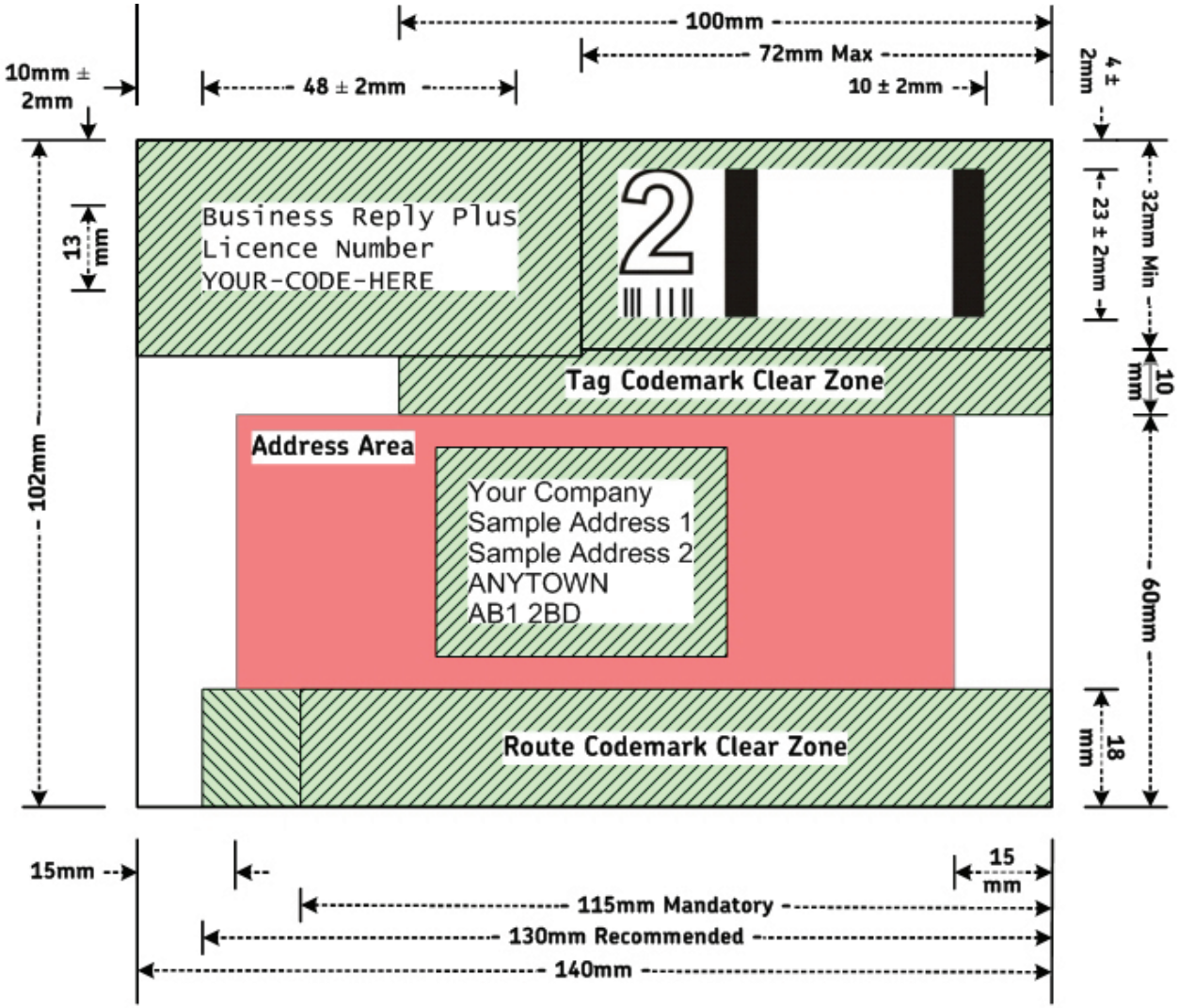
Please note – this template applies to both 1st and 2nd Class design specifications with the exception of the indicia. Please refer to page 23 for 1st and 2nd Class indicia specifications.



Please note – images are not to scale.

Figure 4.
Business Reply Plus
Minimum layout specification

Please note – this template applies for both 1st and 2nd Class design specifications. Please refer to page 23 for 1st and 2nd Class indicia specifications.

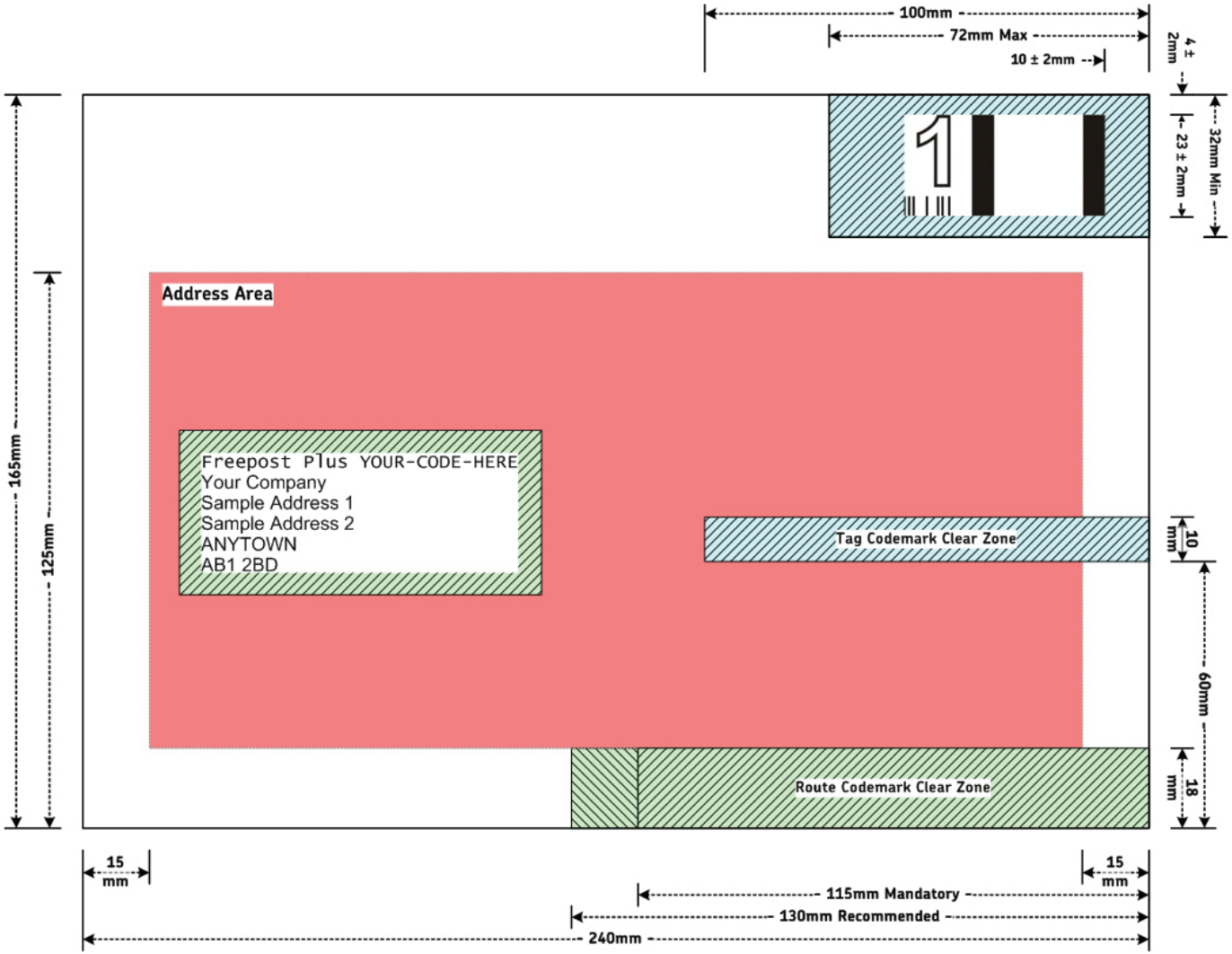


Please note – images are not to scale.

Figure 5.
Freepost Plus
Maximum layout specification

Response Plus design templates in various envelope sizes are available as downloads from **www.royalmail.com/responseservices**

Please note – Freepost Plus follows the same layout as Business Reply Plus, except that the licence number moves from upper left to the address block, as shown. Please refer to page 24 for 1st and 2nd Class indicia specifications.



Please note – images are not to scale.

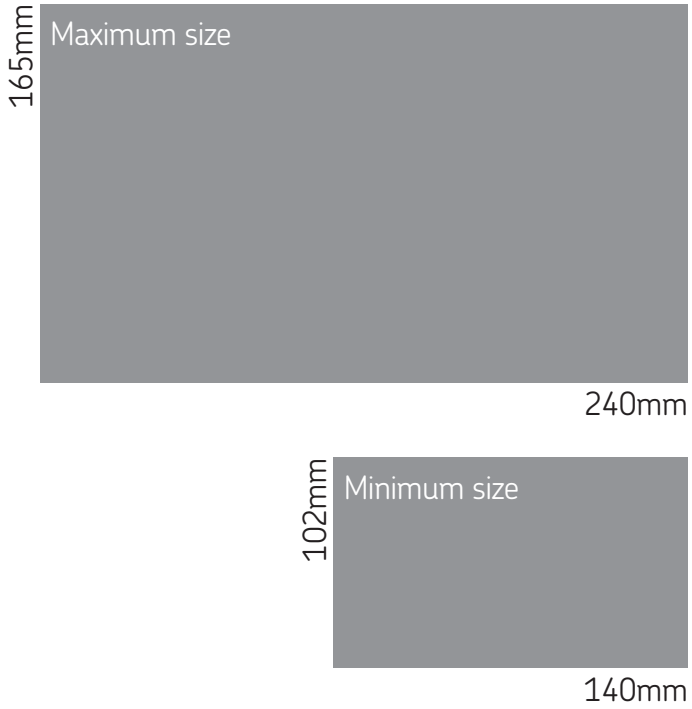
Size, weight and thickness

Size

Your letter must be rectangular, with four straight edges and each corner a right angle (90 degrees). The longest edge should be at least 1.4 times the length of the shortest edge.

Orientation

Response Services mail must always be presented in landscape orientation.



Weight

Your item can have a maximum weight of 100g.

Thickness

The minimum thickness of your envelope is 0.25mm, while its maximum thickness is 5mm.

Please note – images are not to scale.

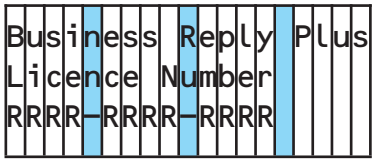
Licence number

We will make your licence number available to you in electronic form. If you prefer, you can create the design yourself by using the specifications in this document.

- Required Print Contrast Ratio for the licence number printed on envelopes ≥ 50%.
- Preferred print colour for the licence number is black.
- Negative contrast is not allowed.

Business Reply Plus style designs

- The licence plate must be positioned at the top left-hand corner of the mailpiece (not contained within a box) and left-hand justified.
- The whole licence plate must be printed in one of the defined fonts (see page 11) in 12pt using 10 characters per 25.4mm (CPI). When printed correctly the characters form into vertical columns as demonstrated by the grid in the figure opposite.
- When printed correctly the licence number should be between 35mm-36mm in length.
- Therefore, using the grid as a guide only, the licence plate must be in the format below:



- The licence number characters should be printed in upper case and must not be printed using bold or italic fonts.
- The words ‘Business Reply Plus’ must be in title case.
- The clear zone around the licence plate must be 10 +/- 2mm.

Please note – images are not to scale.

Freepost Plus style designs

- The first line of the address must bear the words 'Freepost Plus' followed by the licence number. This must be left-hand justified and aligned to the address block. Line spacing must be consistent with that of the address block.
- The licence plate characters must be printed in the defined fonts in 12pt using 10 characters per 25.4mm (CPI). When printed correctly the characters form into vertical columns as demonstrated by the grid in the figure opposite.
- Therefore, using the grid as a guide only, the licence number must be in the format below:

- The words 'Freepost Plus' must be in title case.
- When printed correctly the licence number should be between 35mm-36mm in length.
- The licence number characters should be printed in upper case font and not in bold or italic.

Fonts

Always use a font which can be read by our processing machines. Choose one of these fonts for your licence number:

OCR B (preferred)

Monaco

Letter Gothic

Lucida Console

Lucida Sans Typewriter

Please note – images are not to scale.

Address details

Typography

- The address must be the full and correct geographic address (including postcode) for the place to which the items will be delivered, as defined by the Postal Address File (PAF). The exception is the Department information which must either:
  - include the PAF Department, in which case it must fully match that Department held in PAF
  - exclude the PAF Department.

Addressee information is restricted to two lines of text above the geographic address. (This may include an alternative 'Department' name that is different to that which appears in PAF if required.)

- The address must be typed in a landscape format (parallel to the bottom edge).
- The only punctuation and non-alpha-numeric symbols that may be used are those that are included within the Delivery Address as shown in the Postcode Address File.
- All lines of the address must be left-hand justified.
- The address must not be printed using bold or italic fonts.
- The entire Delivery Address should be printed in Title Case with the exception of the Post Town which can either be printed in Title Case or Upper Case, eg Milton Keynes or MILTON KEYNES.
- The postcode MUST always be printed in UPPER CASE. It should be the last line of the address and on a line by itself. There should be one or two character spaces between the outward and inward elements.
- The address should be provided as a 'block' of text.
- The content of an address line should not be wrapped on to a second line of text - ie London Road must be printed on the same line and not spread over two lines.
- Characters of the same font and point size should be used for each line of the address.
- Character spacing should maintain clear vertical gaps of 0.1mm – 0.4mm between the extremities of adjacent characters.
- Spacing between lines should be uniform – a minimum of 1mm and maximum of 4mm measured from descender to ascender.
- Spacing between words should be < 5mm.
- There should be a maximum of 64 characters (including spaces) per line of the address block.
- There should be no blank lines in the address.
- The address block skew should be no more than 5 degrees.
- The preferred print colour for the address is black.
- Negative contrast is not allowed.
- Print quality should be such that characters are not blurred, smudged, deformed, or incomplete.
- There should be no splashing or ink spatter around the characters.
- Recommended Print Contrast Ratio for addresses printed on envelopes ≥ 50%.

- Recommended Print Contrast Ratio for addresses printed on window inserts ≥ 55%.
- No other text or information that could be mistaken as a Delivery Address should be included on the face of the mailpiece, as this may lead to your items being incorrectly sorted. This includes any areas of an insert which may appear in the window of an envelope if the insert shifts position.
- The gap between licence plate and address block for Freepost Plus must conform to and be consistent with the spacing in the remainder of the address block. Never have a gap between the licence plate and the first line of the address.

Address placement

You have quite a lot of freedom to choose where you place the address (as outlined in Figures 3–5). Just make sure it is at least 15mm from the left edge, 15mm from the right edge and 40mm from the top edge and that you do not impinge on any of the clear zones as outlined below.

Clear zones

Clear zones are zones clear of any markings. They are used by our machines to locate the address on mail items as well as print and read codes. There are four clear zones:

- 18mm from the bottom right-hand corner and 115mm long from the right edge. However, we recommend that it is 130mm long from the right-hand edge. This is the route code clear zone for Royal Mail codemarking.
- 60mm from the bottom edge, 10mm high, 100mm long and aligned to the right edge.
- 5mm around the address in all directions (this may overlap with either or both of the other two clear zones providing the address remains in the address block area).
- 10 +/- 2mm around the licence plate in all directions for Business Reply designs. (For avoidance of doubt the clear zone may overlap the edge of the envelope).

Please note – the address block is defined as a rectangle drawn around the outer extremities of the address, including the recipient's name.

Fonts

Always use an address font which can be read by our processing machines. With Business Reply Plus, you can use any of these fonts:

Arial 10-12 point
Avant Garde 11-15 point
Century School Book 10-11 point
Courier 10-15 point
Courier New 10-15 point
11-14 point
Franklin Gothic 10-12 point
Geneva 10-12 point
Helvetica 10-14 point
Letter Gothic 12 point*
Lucida Console 12 point*
Lucida Sans Typewriter 12 point*
Monaco 12 point*
News Gothic MT 10-12 point
OCRB 12 point*
Univers 10-15 point
Verdana 10-12 point

- With Freepost Plus, you can only use one of the five fonts listed with an asterisk printed at 10 characters per 25.4 mm (CPI).
- Our preferred font is OCRB 12 point.

Window envelopes

Window envelopes must follow these guidelines:

- **Gloss** – the maximum gloss value of the window material is to be 150 when measured at 60º in accordance with ASTM 2457 'Standard Test Method for Specular Gloss of Plastic Films'.
- **Haze** – the window haze should not exceed 75% in accordance with ASTM D1003 'Standard Test Method for Haze of Plastic Films'.
- **Strength** – the window should be robust enough not to become deformed. It should be fixed to the envelope evenly across the surface area it is in contact with.
- The window should not infringe any of the clear zones on the mailpiece.
- Windows on mailpieces should only appear on the front of the mailpiece (the same side as the address).
- Windows should not take up more than 50% of the surface area of the mailpiece.
- There should be no more than two windows on a mailpiece.
- Windows should only appear on the front of the envelope.

Where the address is on an insert within a window, the address must be fully visible, with the left, right and bottom edges of the address block at least 2mm away from the window edge. Additionally, there must be a 5mm clear zone around the top, bottom, left and right edges of the address block, which is free from text, graphics or patterning. Note that this means that if the address block is within 5mm of the window edge, then the area of the envelope adjacent to the window must be clear of print graphics or patterning to provide the required 5mm. (The window edge itself is not considered an infringement of the 5mm clear zone.)

These requirements apply at all times, including after the mail item is tapped on any of its four edges to induce maximum insert movement. It's best to make certain the insert fits snugly within the envelope to prevent excessive movement.

Please note – images are not to scale.

Know your Response Standard audience

The design of Response Standard items offers you more flexibility than that of Response Plus items because they cannot necessarily be processed by our machines and are subject to a handling charge (please see the Response Services rate card). Within the specifications of this document, you're free to customise your Response Standard envelope or card with text or graphics in any way you wish.

With Response Standard you also have the freedom to use all size and weight formats as defined on page 20. The essential design specifications for Business Reply and Freepost are identical except for the:

- licence number
- indicia.

Figure 6.
Business Reply Standard
DL sample design

Figure 7.
Freepost Standard
DL sample design

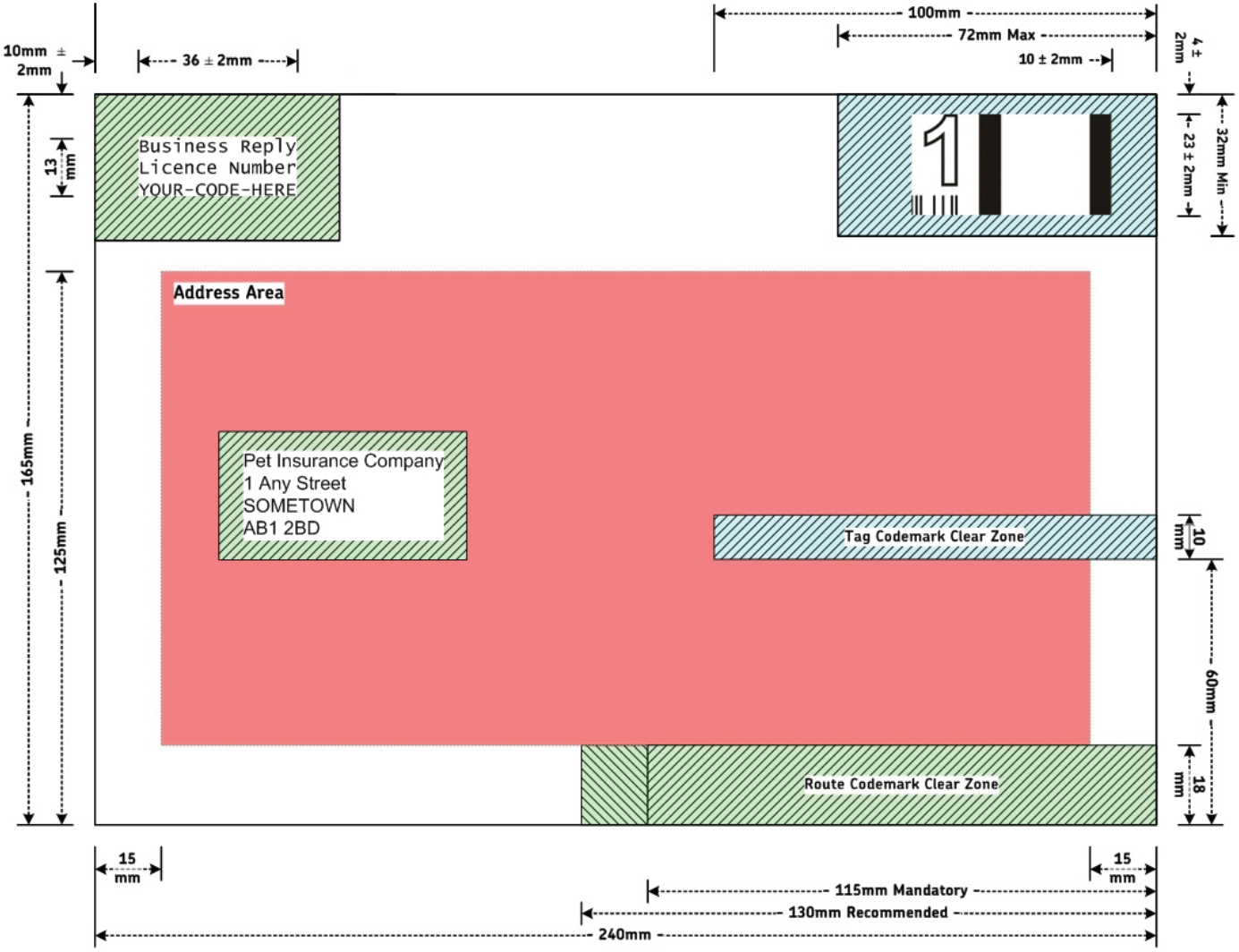
Please note – images are not to scale.

Response Standard design specification

Make sure your Response Standard envelope or card always follows the essential specifications. This will help us get your reply items back to you with greater efficiency.

Figure 8.
Business Reply Standard
Maximum layout specification

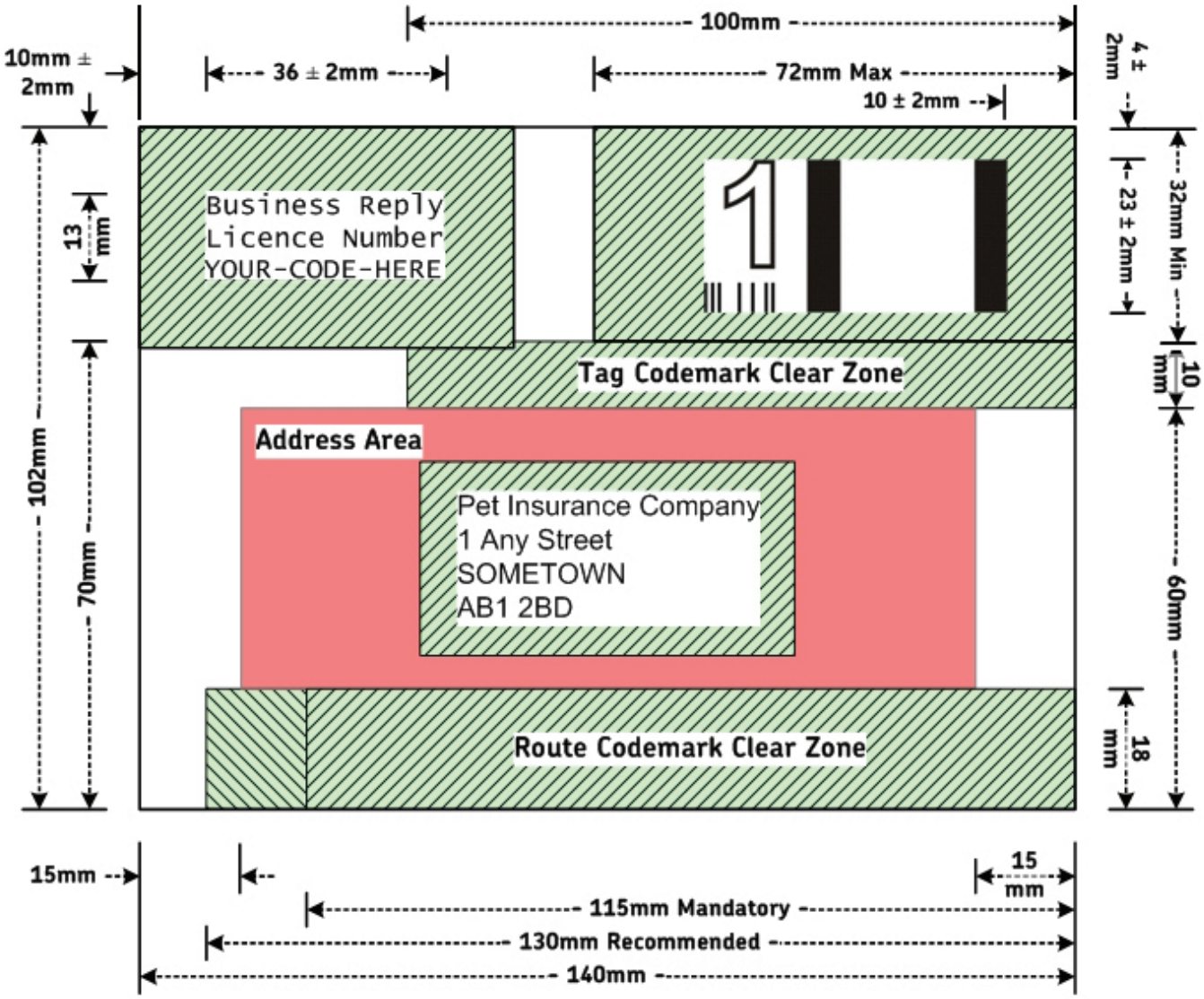
Please note – this template applies to both 1st and 2nd Class design specifications with the exception of the indicia. Please refer to page 23 for 1st and 2nd Class indicia specifications.



Please note – images are not to scale.

Figure 9.
Business Reply Standard
Minimum layout specification

Please note – this template applies to both 1st and 2nd Class design specifications with the exception of the indicia. Please refer to page 23 for 1st and 2nd Class indicia specifications.



Please note – images are not to scale.

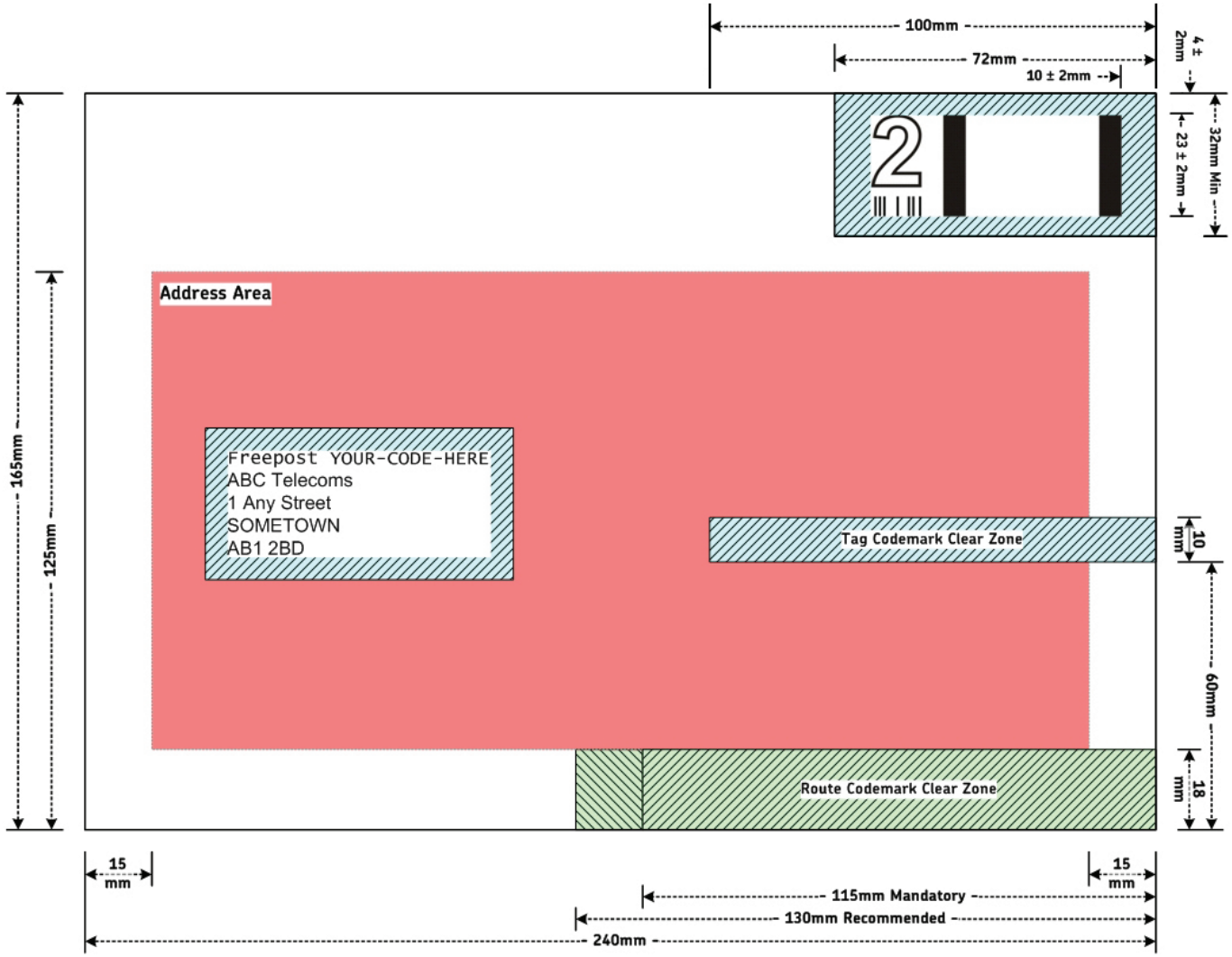
Figure 10.
Freepost Standard
Maximum layout specification

Response Standard design templates in various envelope sizes are available as downloads from **www.royalmail.com/responseservices**

Please do not encourage your customers to return items outside of our specifications.

Please note – Freepost Standard follows the same layout as Business Reply Standard, except that the licence number moves from upper left to the address block, as shown.

This template applies to both 1st and 2nd Class specifications with the exception of the indicia. Please refer to page 24 for 1st and 2nd Class indicia specifications.



Please note – images are not to scale.

Size, weight and dimensions

Size

The minimum size of a mailpiece is 140 x 90mm. Please note that the minimum size to allow for the requisite clear zones to fit on the envelope is 140mm x 102mm.

Preprinted Business Reply and Freepost letter format items must be rectangular with four straight edges and each corner a right angle (90 degrees). The longest edge should be at least 1.4 times the length of the shortest edge.

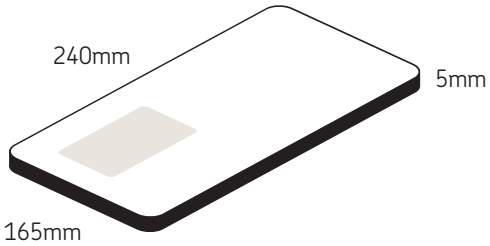
Weight

Your item can have a maximum weight of 1kg when it is 2nd Class. There is no maximum weight for 1st Class items.

Please note – images are not to scale.

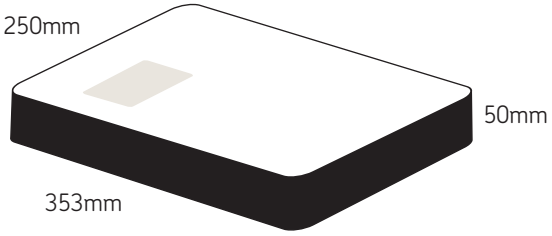
Letter

The minimum thickness of your envelope is 0.25mm. The maximum weight is 100g. The maximum sizes are given below.



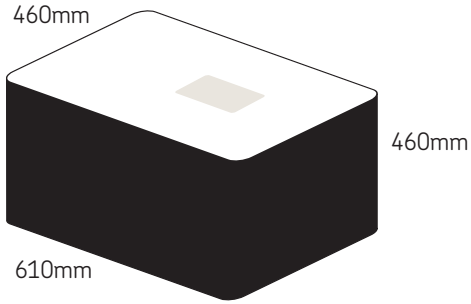
Large Letter

Any item that has a dimension exceeding the maximum dimension for a letter and any item weighing more than 100g.
The maximum weight is 750g.
The maximum sizes are given below.
For Response Services the maximum thickness is 50mm.



Packet – box

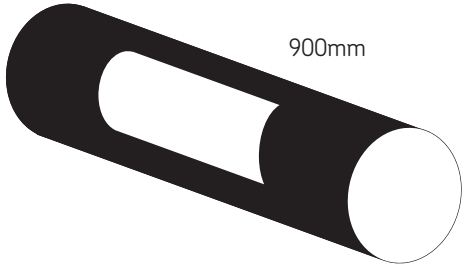
Any item that has a dimension exceeding the maximum dimension for a large letter and any item weighing more than 750g. The maximum sizes are given below.



Packet – tube

Maximum dimensions: length plus twice diameter must not exceed 1,040mm.

Items that are either squarely or rectangularly cuboid in shape are also permitted. All such items at their widest point must still fit within the diameter of the maximum allowable cylindrical dimensions.

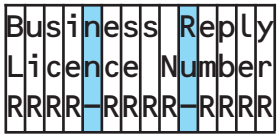


Licence number

We will make your licence number available to you in electronic form. You can create the design yourself if you prefer using the specifications in this document.

Business Reply style designs

- The licence plate must be positioned at the top left–hand corner of the mailpiece (NOT contained within a box).
- The whole licence plate must be printed in one of the defined fonts in 12pt using 10 characters per 25.4mm (CPI). When printed correctly the characters form into vertical columns as demonstrated by the grid in the figure below.
- When printed correctly the licence number should be between 35mm-36mm in length.
- Therefore, using the grid as a guide only, the licence plate must be in the format below:



- The words 'Business Reply' should be in title case.

Please note – images are not to scale.

- The licence number characters should be printed in upper case and must not be printed using bold or italic fonts.
- The clear zone around the licence plate must be 10 +/- 2mm.

Freepost Standard style designs

- The first line of the address must bear the words 'Freepost' followed by the licence number. This should be left justified and aligned to the address block. Line spacing should be consistent with that of the address block.
- The licence number characters should be in one of the defined fonts and be printed in 12 point using 10 characters per 25.4mm (CPI) in the following format:

- The words 'Freepost' should be in title case.
- When printed correctly the licence number should be between 35mm-36mm in length.
- The licence number characters should be printed in upper case font and not in bold or italic.

Fonts

The whole licence plate should be printed in one of the defined fonts. The licence number characters should be printed in upper case font and not in bold or italic.

Choose one of these fonts for your licence plate characters:

- OCR B (preferred)
- Monaco
- Letter Gothic
- Lucida Console
- Lucida Sans Typewriter

Indicia designs

Business Reply Standard style designs and Freepost Standard style designs must have a valid indicia (1st or 2nd Class) which complies with the specifications shown on page 23 and 24.

Address details

Typography
We recommend that the address should be the full and correct geographic address (including postcode) for the place to which the items will be delivered as defined by the Postal Address File (PAF). With the exception of the Department information which must either:

- include the PAF Department, in which case it must fully match that Department held in PAF
- or exclude the PAF Department.

Addressee information is restricted to two lines of text above the geographic address. (This may include an alternative 'Department' name that is different to that which appears in PAF if required.)

- The only punctuation and non-alpha numeric symbols that may be used are those that are included within the Delivery Address as shown in the Postcode Address File.
- All lines of the address must be left-hand justified.
- The entire Delivery Address should be printed in Title Case with the exception of:
  - the Post Town which must be printed in Title Case or Upper Case. eg Milton Keynes or MILTON KEYNES
  - The Postcode must always be printed in UPPER CASE.
- Spacing between lines must be uniform – a minimum of 1mm and a maximum of 4mm measured from descender to ascender.

Fonts
You can use any font you want for the address block. We recommend that you use one of the defined fonts on page 13. Please do not use script font.

Window envelopes
When using a window envelope, you must ensure that the address remains clearly visible in the window at all times. It's best to make certain the insert fits snugly within the envelope to prevent excessive movement.

See page 14 for more detailed guidelines on using window envelopes.

Go to the online design tool at
www.royalmail.com/responseservices

Indicia designs

Contact us and we will send you the indicia in electronic format. You can also download them from **royalmail.com/responseplus**

However, if you would like to design your own indicia please follow the specification on the following two pages.

Position/clear zone
The indicia must be positioned in the top right corner of the mailpiece, 4mm +/- 2mm from the top edge, and 10mm +/- 2mm from the right edge. Nothing else must be printed in an area that extends 32mm from the top of the mailpiece and 72mm from the right hand edge.

Indicia colour
The indicia colour must be black.

Print quality
The indicia must be printed at a minimum resolution of 300dpi.

Contrast ratio
A value of ≥ 20% must be provided.

Please note – images are not to scale.

Skew
The maximum skew for the whole indicia is +/- 3° from the horizontal axis.

Business Reply Plus and Business Reply Standard style designs

All Business Reply Plus and Business Reply Standard style mailpieces must have a valid indicia (1st or 2nd Class) which complies with the following indicia specifications:

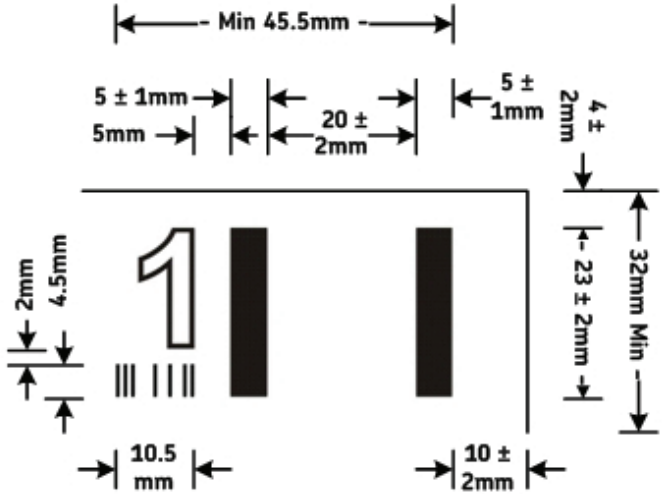


Figure 11.
Business Reply
1st Class indicia dimensions

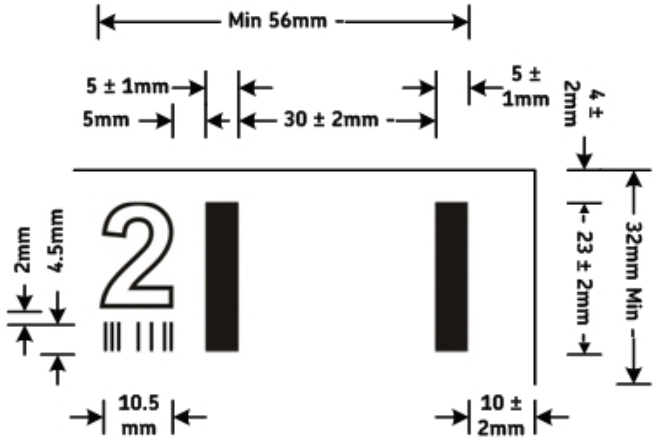


Figure 12.
Business Reply
2nd Class indicia dimensions

Freepost Plus and Freepost Standard style designs

All Freepost Plus and Freepost Standard style mailpieces must have a valid indicia (1st or 2nd Class) which complies with the specifications shown in the examples below.

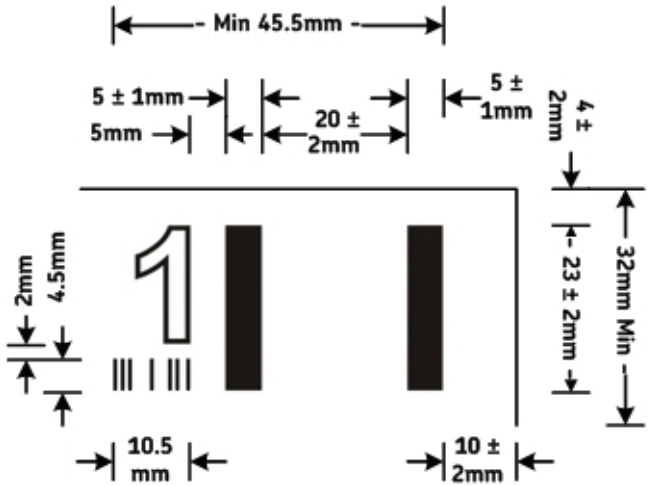


Figure 13.
Freepost
1st Class indicia dimensions

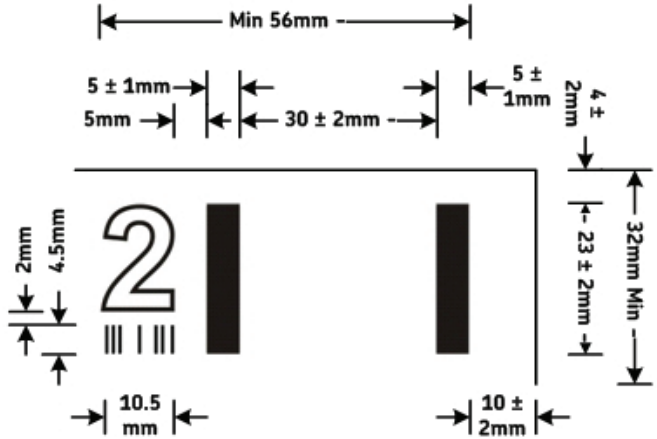


Figure 14.
Freepost
2nd Class indicia dimensions

Please note

The area around the indicia is a designated clear zone. The barcode underneath the postage class number relates to the service chosen ie Business Reply or Freepost.

This barcode is most important, as when read by the machine it determines the service to be used. If Business Reply Plus is chosen, the reader will look for the licence number in the top left-hand corner of the envelope. If Freepost Plus is chosen, the reader will look for the licence number in the first line of the address.

Please note – images are not to scale.

Paper and print specifications for Response Services

You must use these specifications with Response Plus. We recommend that you also use them with Response Standard. If you are using Response Standard and are sending anything other than a letter, we recommend that you follow Royal Mail's packaging guidelines which can be found at www.royalmail.com/packaging

Material
Response Plus items must be paper. You cannot use polythene, plastic or transparent items or envelopes with apertures.

Envelopes should be made of paper with a density no less than 70g per square metre (gsm). Postcards should be made of paper with a density no less than 200gsm and at least 0.25mm thick.

Opacity
The paper on which the address is printed must be more than 85% opaque to prevent any character on the reverse side showing through.

Sealing
The mailpiece must be securely sealed on all sides. Only envelopes, postcards and one-piece mailers can be used.

The opening flap may fold to either the back or the front of the mail item. If the flap folds to the front (address side) of the mailpiece, the edge of the flap must not fall within the clear zones.

Opening flaps must be gummed and sealed as far along the edge as possible. All remained edges must be sealed.

There is a maximum tolerance of up to 25mm of the envelope top and where the flaps do not have to be gummed or sealed.

One-piece mailers
This section defines the specific construction characteristics of one-piece mailers. All other requirements remain as standard.

The mailer must have at least one fold. Where multiple folds are used, these must be internal to the exterior and meet the gluing requirements specified in this section.

The reference edge (the edge that is to the bottom of the mailer below the address block) of the mailpiece must have only one edge that can be detected. ie If multiple folds are required, these must be tucked inside so that there is only one detectable edge on the reference edge.

If a flap is present, it may fold either to the back or front of the mailpiece. If it folds to the front, it must not interfere with the Codemark clear zones. The flap must be securely sealed and have ≥ 30mm contact on the mailpiece. The same rules for glue application apply to the flap as for the edges of the one-piece mailing.

The paper weight must be ≥ 100gsm.

Where spot-weld glue application is used, the distance between the centres of the spots must not exceed 10mm, and the spot size must be ≥ 5mm in diameter. The maximum distance from the edge of the mailpiece for the glue application is ≤ 5mm.

Where continuous weld glue application is used, the maximum distance from the edge of the mailpiece for the glue application is ≤ 5mm.

The glue must not run out onto the outside of the mail item or produce protruding mounds on the mail item.

The glue must be fully cured prior to presentation of the mailing to Royal Mail. The tensile strength of the glue must be ≥ 4.5N and fibre tear must be exhibited on separation.

Porosity
We strongly recommend that the mailpiece should have a porosity value of less than 700ml/minute.

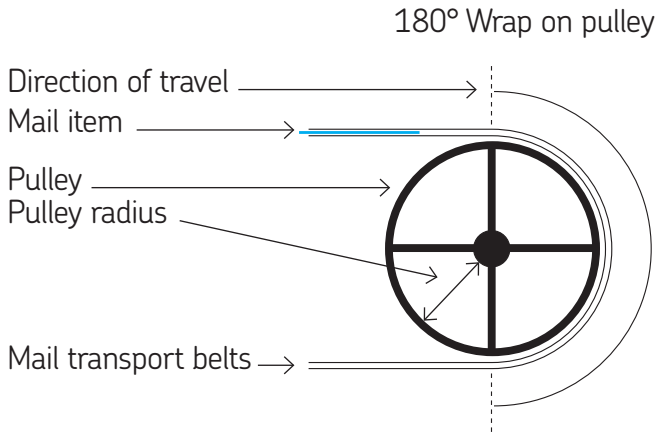
Absorbency
15–35gsm of water in one minute.

Reflection
The background reflectivity of the material on which the address is printed must be at least 35% in the red region (600nm) when measured by a spectral reflectometer.

Print Contrast Ratio
The contrast ratio between the background and the address must be at least 50% and at least 55% for window envelopes. The typeface should never be lighter than the background colour.

Paper colour
The best colours to use are white, cream or light buff.

Flexibility
Letters must be flexible along their longest edge. Items must be flexible enough to be capable of being processed in our sorting machines without damage to the machine, the mailpiece, or other mailpieces. Each mailpiece must therefore be capable of being transported around a pulley with a radius of 140mm with a maximum force of 26 Newtons. Don't enclose inflexible objects such as coins, keys and thick card coupons.



Please note – images are not to scale.

Things to avoid

The following are typical problems, which can prevent your mail from being processed by an OCR machine:

- Characters with incorrect proportions.

stretched or condensed

large or small

- Poor quality of characters – ones which are poorly printed or defined, either because they have been printed by low quality printers or low resolution dot matrix printers, or because the printer needs maintenance (worn ribbon, low on toner/ink etc).

- Characters with poor outlines – fuzzy or blurred, or strokes which are incomplete, broken or smeared.
- Close character spacing – characters which touch adjacent characters, whether on the same line or those from above or below.

Manor Road or Manor Road
EALING

- Proportionally or unevenly spaced text – characters or words which have too much space between them (more than four character widths or 10mm in size).

M a n o r R o a d

- Over-elaborate typeface styles – italic, inclined, graphic, pseudo-script or handwriting imitations. Typefaces with excessive serifs, which touch or overlap adjacent characters or serifs. Hollow, bold or very heavy fonts. An example of a heavy font might be Arial Black. Generally, sans-serif fonts are preferable to serif fonts.

Script or handwriting

- Poor print contrast – printing white type on a black background or similar, or combinations of colours such as black print on a strong red background.

Contact us

Visit us at **www.royalmail.com/responseservices**

Call your local Royal Mail Sales Centre on **08457 950 950** (local rate).

If you are deaf or hard of hearing, we offer a Textphone service on **08456 000606**.

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